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ABSTRACT

The Transition Services program of the Onondaga-Dortland-Madison Board of Cooperative Educational Services (New York) has been identified as an exemplary school-to-work program that includes students with disabilities. The program serves students aged 13-21, most with disabilities; the majority have mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, and multiple disabilities. The program has been instrumental in reducing the dropout rate of at-risk students by increasing their awareness of opportunities available to them with training and a diploma. Students must be enrolled in an academic classroom and spend a half-day there and a half-day in the program. Transition Services is tailored to two age groups: students 13-15 participate in the prevocational training program; students 16-21 participate in onsite vocational training. During the intake interview, a vocational interest inventory and discussions with the student and teacher determine an appropriate job placement. A placement is developed based on interests, strengths, and availability of specific jobs. Ongoing evaluation leads to a variety of job experiences. Exemplary school-to-work components include the following: prevocational learning with hands-on training in various functional skill areas; community workplace experience/vocational exploration; and job coaching. Collaboration with local employers is an integral component of the program. (YLB)

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ED 420 801

Transition Services
Onodaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES
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Mission/Goals

To develop and provide quality educational and transitional programs for all students. The goals of the project are to (*a*) provide community-based vocational training experiences for students with special needs, (*b*) increase students' understanding of employers' expectations, (*c*) assist students in exploring their interests and abilities, (*d*) help students develop work habits and attitudes appropriate to the world of work, (*e*) encourage and assist students to make linkages to other service providers, and (*f*) assist graduating students in obtaining and maintaining employment.

Organization/Program Context

The Transition Services program was developed by several Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) staff as an attempt to address the needs of students with disabilities who had left formal schooling with inadequate vocational training. The program has been instrumental in reducing the drop-out rate of at-risk students by increasing their awareness of the opportunities that may be available to them with training and a diploma. All students in the program have to be enrolled in an academic classroom. They spend half of their day in the academic classroom and the other half in the program. By their exposure to a variety of training experiences, students develop a new appreciation to the real need of academics.

Description

Students between the ages of 13 and 21 are eligible to participate in the program either through referral from the Committee on Special Education (CSE), or through the guidance department for non-disabled students. The CSE is responsible for program planning for all special education students within their school district. They hold annual planning meetings for each student wherein the Transition Services program is introduced to the students and their families by the program staff. The program is recommended by CSE depending on the student's individual needs and interests. If the parents and the committee agree on the program, it then becomes a part of the student's IEP. The student information is then referred to the Transition Services program and the program staff schedule an intake interview with the student.

Transition Services tailors itself to two different age groups: Students 13-15 years old participate in the pre-vocational training program, and students 16-21 years old participate in on-site vocational training. Students who participate in the on-site vocational training program most often range in age from 18 to 21. The students are placed in an ungraded class in which the only grade designation that exists is "senior". This designation denotes the year in

Contact Person

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Community Setting

Cortland is a small city with a population of 20,000 and Cortland County is a rural community with a population of 49,000. Cortland County has 5 school districts and BOCES Transition Services serves all districts as well as 3 other school districts in adjoining counties OCM BOCES serves 23+ districts.

Population Served

One hundred forty students ranging in age from 13 to 21 most of whom have disabilities, . The majority of students have mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities and/or multiple disabilities.

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Program Staff

Coordinator, Transition Services
1 full time

- Coordinates the program
- Supervises and supports the job coaches
- Writes grants for continued funding
- Provides individual and group vocational counseling to students

Employment Specialist/ Job Developer
2 full time

- Develops placement opportunities
- Acts as liaison to the business community
- Provide individual and group vocational counseling

Pre Vocational Instructor
1 full time

- Instructs in the prevocational component of the program
- Works with students in placements to improve basic vocational skills
- Develops curriculum

Program Secretary
1 half time

- Maintains departmental records and files
- Answers phones
- Acts as liaison with employers and schools in the absence of supervisor

Job Coach
Several part time

- Teaches work skills and behaviors at the work sites
- Maintains a daily logs for each student

which the student will graduate from the program. During the intake interview, a vocational interest inventory and discussions with the student and his or her teacher are conducted to determine an appropriate job placement for the student.

Following the interview, a placement is developed for the student based on interests, strengths, and availability of specific jobs. Whenever possible, students are given at least 2 jobs to choose from. The student visits the site for an interview with the supervisor prior to beginning the job assignment. Once on the job site, the students are provided with job coaches if necessary. Student job situations are changed on an average of two times a year based on the student's progress, interest, and the need to broaden their vocational training experiences.

Ongoing evaluation leads to a variety job experiences during the student's enrollment in the program. This is conducted in the form of a formal evaluation completed by site supervisors and job coaches; informal discussions with the students, teachers, job coaches, parents and supervisors; and student observations by the staff.

Collaboration with local employers is an integral component of the program. This is achieved through actively seeking new employers to participate in the program as well as having ongoing communications and responding to their needs and the needs of the students working in their business. During their "senior" year, students explore a job placement that will continue as an ongoing employment following graduation.

Exemplary School-to-Work Components

School-based Learning

Pre-Vocational Instruction. Students age 13-15 receive vocational instruction which provides hands-on training in various functional skill areas within a structured classroom setting to prepare students for various work placements.

Work-based Learning

Community Workplace Experience/ Vocational Exploration. Students ages 15-21 participate in on-site, vocational training which places them in a variety of workplace settings and gives them the opportunity to explore various career interests.

Job coaching. Job coaches are provided to those students who need additional support and/or supervision than is available at the work-site. Job coaches provide the necessary support to learn specific job tasks and help to reinforce appropriate work habits and attitudes.

What Makes it Work?

- Supportive community and employers: Many employers have been involved with the program for over 10 years and recommend the program to other businesses in the field.
- Motivated students: Students enjoy the opportunity to be out in the community working with local employers.
- Dedicated, caring, and consistent staff: They go out of their way to provide successful experiences for the students.

- Team work: The students, employers, parents, and staff collaborate together brainstorming and sharing ideas to ensure that the students have a positive experience.
- Continued improvements to programs: There is active solicitation of recommendations from various stakeholders about ways to help improve the program.

Harry's Story

Harry, a student with serious emotional disturbance, joined the program at the age of 13. Characteristics associated with his disability had been the major contributing factors in Harry exhibiting various inappropriate behaviors including noncompliance and difficulties with classroom staff and school rules. While in Transition Services, Harry enrolled in the vocational training program and began to explore vocational interests and learning about appropriate work habits and attitudes. At age 16, Harry enrolled in the on-site vocational training program and experienced a variety of work experiences. He needed job coach support for a short period of time. Harry began to demonstrate independence at his work-site and learned to utilize both naturally occurring supports and public transportation.

His workplace experiences showed Harry a real purpose for his academic studies which had a very positive impact on his behavior at school. Following graduation, Harry moved to an apartment, gained full-time employment at his last work-site, and became very involved in accessing all the services available in his community including recreation and leisure.

Harry continues to remain in touch with Transition Services regularly and is doing well. He has even changed jobs at his own initiative, with assistance from a supported employment agency.

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For Further Information

School-to-Work Outreach Project
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http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/schooltowork/

School-to-work is described in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

School to work is . . .

A System built to provide opportunities for students to learn about and experience work while in school.

Educational Reform that addresses the need for students to gain work experience and workplace skills while in school.

Partnerships between schools, employers and communities.

For <u>All</u> Students, kindergarten through 12th grade.

School-to-Work Outreach Project Overview

The School-to-Work Outreach Project at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) is a nationwide, three year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This project assists and supports school-to-work initiatives through the identification of exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies that include students with disabilities. Exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies are identified through a five step selection process:

- **Nomination**
- **Application**
- **Reference**
- **Application Review**
- **Final Review and Selection**

Identification Criteria and School-to-Work Priority Areas, established by the School-to-Work Outreach Project, guide the application review.

Profiles of the identified models/practices/strategies are available upon request. Adoption and replication of these exemplary school-to-work activities is encouraged and technical assistance is available to schools and organizations interested in implementing these models/practices/strategies or improving existing school-to-work activities and systems. Contact the School-to-Work Outreach Project at the above address for further information.

Basic Elements of School-to-Work

School-based Learning - Instruction and experiences based on academic and occupational standards.

Work-based Learning - Workplace experience, structured training, mentoring and apprenticeships at job sites.

Connecting Activities - A variety of activities that build and maintain bridges between school, work and other adult environments.

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